

## GOSSIP OF THE DRAMA FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

## "Popular" Music.

Does Washington Care Only for the Classics? A Coupon Vote and the Conclusions It Suggests.

Gauges of the public mind are invariably uncertain. Straws which tell which way the wind blows may be had by the thousand, and a genuine, trustworthy indication of the sentiment which controls an entire community is almost impossible to obtain. Public opinion is, after all, not unlike a river which flows steadily toward a fixed outlet but occasionally turns and crooks to run in an apparently opposite direction.

Such as these indications are, however, a mighty reassuring one has been afforded as to the condition of musical taste in Washington. It is the result of an effort on the part of those who manage the Symphony Orchestra to determine the kind of music most in favor with their Sunday night audiences. Coupons were attached to the programs of last Sunday's concert for the indication by the auditor of the kind of music which would be most pleasing to him. The audience was of good size and the number of responses was large. The test, therefore, was as good as any such test could be expected to be.

The results were a complete surprise to Director De Koven and Manager Heard. In only one instance was the auditor's choice cheap—one of the coupons asked for "Georgia Campmeeting," providing that it is suitably arranged. Every other coupon asked for music which was not only pure in quality but representative of the composer's true character.

## A Remarkable Vote.

But a compilation of the coupons will be more significant than a column of generalizations. The coupons were divided as follows:

Wagner—Eighteen per cent, with the "Tannhäuser" march and overture in the lead, the overture to "Lohengrin" second, the prelude to "Lohengrin" third, the "Fire Music" fourth, and selections from "Die Meistersinger," "The Flying Dutchman," "The Valkyrie," "The Evening Star Song," "The Lohengrin," and variations on "Tannhäuser Doodle."

Grieg—Ten per cent, all naming the "Peer Gynt" suite.

Handel—Five per cent, all naming "Largo" movement from "Xerxes."

Mascagni—Five per cent, all naming the intermezzo to "Cavalleria Rusticana."

The remaining coupons included Beethoven, Mozart, Liszt, Chopin, Saint Saens, Schubert, Chaminade, Strauss, Dvorak, Mendelssohn, Thome, Rossini, Rubinstein, Suppe, Gounod, De Koven, Wallace, Delibes, Waldteufel, Bizet, Debussy, Elgar, Lang, Leutner, Verdi, Raff, Leoncavallo, Ruckmanhof, Massenet, Auber, and Sullivan. In this last list were included, for example, Mozart's "Twelfth Mass," and Beethoven's "First Symphony."

Manifestly this is not cheap music. It is on the contrary very good music of the highest class, if it is granted that programs for public entertainment should be catholic in their composition. The preponderance of Wagner, the high favor shown to the apparent pleasure in Handel's Largo, and the presence on the list of such composers as Mozart, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, and Chopin indicates, indeed, not a public taste developed beyond the "Suwanee River" stage, but an intelligent appreciation of music equal at least to that of most students of music in most conservatories.

## On a High Plane.

This is an astonishing disclosure. It must be borne in mind, however, that this weather-vane of public opinion is as trustworthy as all the rest. But the result of the test is still astonishing.

Excellent students of music have said more than once that the proper appreciation of a work like Beethoven's "First Symphony" or Wagner's "Valkyrie" required from them an intense intellectual application which left them at the close of the performance thoroughly tired. No melodic music—chiefly which phrase is music—music—chiefly distinguished for its melody—is invariably hard to understand, exactly as all literary works which are not simple narrations are difficult to understand.

Finally the melodic music of Handel's "Largo" or Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony," conspicuous as those works are for other qualities, are undoubtedly the source of most immediate pleasure to all the musicians who hear them.

Yet the intellectual application, the subordination of melody to other musical qualities in these selections, have not to this public assembly—outweighed the genuine musical value of the works specified on the coupons. It is, assuredly, a remarkable disclosure.

## Going Behind the Returns.

A first inquiry into this test would lead the student to think musical taste in Washington wonderfully high. Is that assurance sustained by other tests equally good?

The Metropolitan Grand Opera Company tried several years ago to obtain Washington audiences for the Ring operas. It failed. If musical taste in the Capital was what it seemed to be from this test, the Wagner operas would have drawn the crowd and Rossini and Verdi would have been neglected. Director Savage made a careful survey of Washington before he chose the operas for his season of grand opera in English, and chose, instead of "The Master-singers" and "The Flying Dutchman," "Carmen" and "Il Trovatore," and the largest audience of the week attended to hear "Il Trovatore."

The likelihood is that what is most for a concert would be unpalatable fare for an operatic performance. Nine concertgoers out of ten, perhaps, delight in the "Ride of the Valkyries," but not more than two or three could enjoy a corresponding delight in the performance of the entire opera. It is extremely likely, furthermore, that personal pride entered into the making of this coupon vote. Many a man who likes "Georgia Campmeeting" and would be glad to hear it played would hesitate to give a corresponding down a fool. Many a man, moreover, who goes to grand opera under protest would feel the force of the same control in voting in such an election—his own taste is thoroughly subjugated to "the thing." Finally there are doubtless scores of concertgoers who feel instinctively the value of right music, whether they understand it or not, and who would in such a vote write down Wagner or Beethoven or Liszt when their un-



ANNIE LAUGHLIN in "The Wizard of Oz."

derstanding took them only to Bizet, Rossini, and Verdi. It will not do to hang too much significance on this peg of a program vote.

## Still Much to Learn.

Constant attendance on theaters and at concerts gives the critic, perhaps, a better basis of judgment, a basis which corresponds largely with the steady flow of public sentiment. He sees not only the audience which applauds Schubert's "Du Bist Die Ruh" and demands its repetition, but the audience which jams the theater to hear "Il Trovatore." He sees very much the same people at "The Sil-ver Slipper" and the Symphony concerts on Friday afternoons. He sees a theater empty at a superlative concert by the Philadelphia orchestra and another theater crowded for a ridiculous performance by a man named Duss and a humdrum orchestra. He would like to think, if he could, that such a test as this of last Sunday was thorough. But he cannot.

The real state of public opinion in Washington, as it concerns music, may not be exactly determined. Any attempt to do so, at least, would inevitably arouse controversy of a profitless kind. But those who follow local musical affairs closely will not object to these observations on the Symphony coupon test.

That it reflects the choice of a selected class—albeit the class which must support the Symphony.

That it reflects the best desires of that class and not its average desires.

That Washington, like all other American cities, has still much to learn before the community can claim the distinction which such a vote as that of last Sunday would signify.

A. D. A.

## Past and Future.

Mr. Mansfield's new play, no less than Mr. Mansfield's new impersonation, held the attention of Washington playgoers this past week.

There is a fine pleasure in viewing the manifestations of such art as Mr. Mansfield's, which produces fine results, however applied. Thus, Mr. Mansfield is as ready to act a German prince of undeniable youth as an Egyptian king of undeniable age, a role chiefly notable for its romance as well as one chiefly notable for its "character." Prince Karl Heinrich offered another proof of the value which belongs to true art—it is nothing if not comprehensive.

But "Old Heidelberg" was also delightful for this attribute—that it was a genuine poem composed with a fine sense of dramatic value. The play would almost at itself, although of course it has multiplied value when acted as Mr. Mansfield's company acted it at the Columbia. Few scenes more artistically pathetic than that of Prince Karl's introduction to the Heidelberg students have been offered in Washington. The situation suggested an art truth never far from the mind of the good dramatist, that true pathos and apparent gaiety are often closely associated. Meyer Portner's chief accomplishment, however, is this: that he has developed a simple and dignified theme so that its beauty and importance appeal to other minds than his own. This is, after all, the great mission of all art.

Mrs. Wiggs, happily not disturbed in her transition to the stage, delighted the audiences at the National. The reason was obvious—both dramatist and actor labored intelligently to catch the true spirit of Mrs. Hegar-Rose's book. Mrs. Cook, in fact, achieved the greatest distinction of her career. Hereafter she will be known, not as the mother of Eleanor Robson, but as the original Mrs. Wiggs. Will T. Dodge and Helen Lowell were fine assistants. Both of them are now established in the front rank of American character actors. Those interested in theatricals who saw this performance must have been impressed by the success which has attended the enterprise of the Liebler company. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in their consideration of author and playwright. The thought is at least worth some attention.

"The Sign of the Cross" proved

strongly attractive as of yore. Chase's obtained good patronage with an average bill. The melodrama houses played to good audiences of characteristic personnel.

Forbes Robertson's Hamlet will be the artistic sensation of next week. Many high grade critics and one or two distinguished actors who have themselves done Hamlet describe Mr. Robertson's performance as the best the modern stage has produced. It is said to be most remarkable for its realistic intensity. Seeing Hamlet will be a fine experience if the performance justifies such praise as this.

"The Wizard of Oz" is announced by other cities as a musical play of real originality, true comedy, genuine musical value, honest fun, and the charm of a fairy tale. It ought to make, if these promises are redeemed, a fine "opposite" for "Hamlet" and the "Light That Failed."

The season continues to be notable.

## At the Theaters.

## Columbia—Forbes Robertson's "Hamlet"

An event of extraordinary interest in local theatricals will occur at the Columbia Theater tomorrow night, when the eminent English actor, Forbes Robertson, and Gertrude Elliott, accompanied by their London company, from the Lyric Theater, will begin a week's engagement.

Forbes Robertson has long been known on the English stage as one of the most powerful and finished actors of the day, many critics, indeed ranking him as second to none living. Trained in the artistic, polished school of stagecraft, his acting is accredited with great interpretative feeling and reserve force. Miss Elliott, in private life, Mrs. Forbes Robertson, was last seen here as a member of Nat. Goodwin's company, and is credited with having advanced in her art to a remarkable degree since taking her position among the leading women of the London stage.

The engagement here will embrace "Hamlet," and the much-talked-of Kipling play, "The Light That Failed." "Hamlet" will be given Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights and the Saturday matinee. From advance accounts and press dispatches, the keynote of Mr. Forbes Robertson's "Hamlet" is its modernity. His acting version of the great tragedy which is his own, is made chiefly from the Cambridge and Variorum editions. He has placed all the scenes in the Castle of Elsinore, to emphasize and simplify the action and render more scope and freedom to the characters. He has also introduced the Fortinbras episode (generally eliminated) in the last act, which renders the play complete. Miss Elliott will, of course, essay Ophelia. Jennie A. Eustace, the only American in the company, has been especially engaged to play the Queen Mother. It will be recalled that Miss Eustace played the character with E. H. Sothern.

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## National—"Wizard of Oz."

Spectacular extravaganza will diversify the season's offerings at the National Theater the coming week. "The Wizard of Oz" comes from a long and remarkably successful run in New York. It is described as a clever blending of comic and serious, pantomime, extravaganza, and opera, up-to-date musical comedy. Messrs. Montgomery and Stone, who have two unique characters as the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman; Annie Laughlin, who appears as a breezy Kansas maiden, transposed in the wings of a cyclone to the fairland of Oz, head the cast. Her adventures in this mystic region, where she encounters all kinds of queer creatures, are said to be entertaining because of their startling whimsicality; fantastic and almost bewildering in color and beauty. In scenic beauty "The Wizard of Oz" is said to be a marvel of stage effects.



FORBES ROBERTSON as "HAMLET."

Among its modern amusements is a cyclone, which carries away in full view of the audience, a Kansas farm house, and, after whirling the wreckage of the wind over sea and land, deposits it in the mystic land of Oz. Another surprise is the metamorphosis of a field of poppies in full bloom from summer to winter. Playgoers are requested by the management to come early to the performance, as the curtain rises promptly at 8 o'clock upon the realistic cyclone scene.

## Lafayette—"Shore Acres."

James A. Herne's charming play of American home life, "Shore Acres" has demonstrated the value of quiet and intense acting. It has also shown the player that it is not necessary to act whenever he is on the stage. The scene between the lovers in the first act and Nathaniel's telling of his father's shipwreck are admirable illustrations of this new school of acting. The character studies in "Shore Acres" are also interesting and the idiosyncracies of the people introduced are sharply differentiated. Although it is but a play of simple, every day life upon a New England farm, yet rarely has its minute analysis of the human passions been equaled. This is its twelfth consecutive season, and Mrs. Herne feels confident it will prove attractive for many years to come. Entire new scenery will be used in the production to be given of "Shore Acres" at the Lafayette, this season.

## Chase's—James Thornton.

James Thornton, as sedate looking as a country parson, but primed with as many funny stories as a Hebrew drummer, will head the Chase bill this week, and the fact that he is given that position by the management is expected to carry convincing proof that he deserves it to those unfamiliar with Mr. Thornton's fame as a fabulist of funny life.

He is said to be one of the best ballad writers of the day, the composer of many noted and laughable parodies, and the originator of many a biting jest that leaves a sting and a laugh. The Ellmore Sisters will be the next important feature in a new character farce, "The Adventures of Bedouine" having the lady of the song "The Great Fugate," so styled, is said to be a marvelous transformationist. Ameta, Spanish mirror dancer, will be seen in a quartet of her spectacular and serpentine creation. She is described as a rival of La Loie Fuller, and her dances are named "La Parisian," "Las Sol," "El Infante," "Lo Agua Fria," "Artie Hall," (the genuine Georgia girl), will be the ginger tone of the bill. Alf Holt will have a number of laughable imitations. The Flood Brothers will be seen in acrobatic and pantomime performance. "The American Vitaphone motion pictures will illustrate the life of Marie Antoinette.

Academy—"In Old Kentucky." Jacob Litt's well-known and highly popular play, "In Old Kentucky," will be presented at the Academy next week by the regular "No. 1" company. Last season this play as performed by these actors proved to be one of the strongest attractions the Academy has ever booked. Much is expected of it this season as the Madge of the east, Beattie Barriscale, has created a deep impression everywhere she has been seen in the role.

## Empire—"The Denver Express."

"The Denver Express," which comes to the Empire tomorrow, has enjoyed several seasons of prosperity, and is said to be considerably above the average melodrama in point of merit. Another special production of "Sapho" is announced for next Friday afternoon and evening.

## Lyceum—"Transatlantic Burlesquers."

The Trans-Atlantic Burlesquers will open a week's engagement at the Lyceum Theater beginning with a matinee performance Monday. It is asserted that every specialty in the old and every song, as well as every situation in the new burlesque, "Two Hot Knights," has the stamp of originality on it.

## Mrs. Tyler's Success.

On Easter Monday Frank L. Perley will produce in New York a comic opera entitled a "Venetian Romance." The book is by Mrs. Cornelia Osgood Tyler, who is the wife of Col. Augustus C. Tyler. Colonel Tyler is a member of the New York Yacht Club, the Manhattan Club, and other clubs. Mrs. Tyler

## Mansfield's Discipline.

The stern discipline maintained by Richard Mansfield in his theatrical company is well known. It is as rigorous as in a military organization. The company has been rehearsing each day this week at the Columbia "Ivan, the Terrible," the new play which Mr. Mansfield will present for the first time in New York next week. Every spare minute was utilized, and the lines were drawn so closely on absence on the part of the actors that even Mr. Mansfield was forced to decline the numerous social invitations which he received.

Another sufferer in this respect was Hamilton Coleman, who played with the true Heidelberg spirit the part of Kurt Engelbrecht in "Old Heidelberg" last week. Mr. Coleman is the son of H. Dudley Coleman, one time Representative in Congress from the Second District of Louisiana.

The Hon. R. C. Davey, the present member from that district, had planned a luncheon at his committee room at the Capitol in honor of Mr. Coleman so that the young actor might meet the members of the Louisiana Congressional delegation, but his part in "Ivan, the Terrible" is of such importance that it was impossible to permit his absence from rehearsal, and Judge Davey was regretfully obliged to abandon the project.

## Tonight's Symphony Concert

Program Based on Requests From Last Audience.

In furtherance of the earnest wish of the management of the Washington Symphony Orchestra, under Mr. de Koven, to place itself in rapport with the wishes and tastes of the Washington public, the program of the concert tonight at Chase's Theater will embody the numbers particularly desired by the audience of last Sunday. Wagner is down for two selections, and the other pieces chosen indicate a rare and interesting discrimination on the part of the musical public. The solo will be performed by Arthur W. Porter, the popular basso, so well known in choirs and circles in this city, who will sing "Palm Branches," accompanied by the orchestra, and the "Armorer's Song" of de Koven's familiar opera, "Robin Hood."

The entire program of the evening will be as follows:

Overture, "East and West".....Suppe  
(a) "Largo".....Handel  
(b) "Largo".....Schubert  
(c) "Largo".....Handel  
(d) "Largo".....Schubert  
(e) "Largo".....Handel  
(f) "Largo".....Schubert  
(g) "Largo".....Handel  
(h) "Largo".....Schubert  
(i) "Largo".....Handel  
(j) "Largo".....Schubert  
(k) "Largo".....Handel  
(l) "Largo".....Schubert  
(m) "Largo".....Handel  
(n) "Largo".....Schubert  
(o) "Largo".....Handel  
(p) "Largo".....Schubert  
(q) "Largo".....Handel  
(r) "Largo".....Schubert  
(s) "Largo".....Handel  
(t) "Largo".....Schubert  
(u) "Largo".....Handel  
(v) "Largo".....Schubert  
(w) "Largo".....Handel  
(x) "Largo".....Schubert  
(y) "Largo".....Handel  
(z) "Largo".....Schubert

## Three Woman Stars.

Comment on Well-Known Artists Who Will Sing in Grand Opera.

In view of the prospective appearance here of the non-German stars of the Metropolitan Grand Opera Company, brief sketches of those artists will have an especial interest. Most of them are already known here, either for their appearance in concert or for earlier impersonations and performances in opera. But Mme. Akte, who is to sing the role of Marguerite in "Faust," is an entire stranger.

This stranger is a Finn, twenty-five years old, and the wife of a distinguished Finnish barrister, Dr. Ronnell, of Helsingfors. She is a daughter of two distinguished musicians, is described as being in person elegant, slender, tall, and pretty, and has been accepted in other cities, notably Paris, as the most perfect of Marguerites. Her education was obtained from her mother and the Conservatoire of Paris.

In that city she took first prize in the



GERTRUDE ELLIOTT as Maisie in "The Light That Failed."

class devoted to opera, and was at once engaged by M. Gailhard for the Grand Opera House. She sang there every season until her first coming to America, appearing as Marguerite, Elsa, Elizabeth, and Nedda. Shortly before the death of Zola, that writer singled her out to create the part of the heroine in a new opera, which is not completed, for which Zola was writing the book and Brunau the music. Leoncavallo, well known as the author of "Pagliacci," was so impressed by her singing that he at once began work on a new opera for her.

Akte made a tour through Finland, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Germany last summer, and won laurels everywhere. In Christiania she was surrounded by the students, and in Stockholm King Oscar decorated her with the Ribbon of Letters and Arts. Her voice is described as a brilliant and flexible soprano, "pure and of the virginal quality."

## Semblich's Remarkable Career.

Marcella Semblich sang here so recently in concert that detailed comment on her voice is not now necessary. These details of her career, however, will have interest.

In the old city of Lemberg, in Austrian Poland, she was born, in 1858, and from her father, a music teacher named Kahanovsky, she received her first instructions in music. Before she was twelve she appeared in concerts, distinguishing herself by her playing on the piano and the violin, and was glad to drum out dance music to set the feet of others waiting for the sake of the small fee that was paid her.

When a mere child, she gathered her little savings of months, to spend them for a seat at the opera where Patti was to appear. For five hours she stood in line on a bitter cold night waiting to get her ticket, and at last from an obscure corner in the gallery she heard the famous nightingale of song.

The poor little Polish girl, listening, absorbed in the music, had no vision of similar triumphs of her own. Her ambition was to excel in instrumental music, and in her later study under Bruckman and Prof. Stengel she had no consciousness that the golden fortune of her genius was in her throat and not in her fingers. In her study with Franz Liszt, in Vienna, the revelation came, and under the inspiring teaching of Lamperti, the younger, a new great singer was added to the world's choir of fame.

In 1877 she made her debut as Elvira in "Il Puritani" at the Royal Theater in classic Athens. A month later, with fame assured, she married Prof. Stengel, her former master in music, and after a happy honeymoon she returned

## Miss Robison's Dramatic Recital.

Mabel Forest Robison, a young aspirant for approbation as a reader and reciter, will make her initial bow before a Washington audience Friday afternoon, March 4, in the New Willard ball room. Miss Robison's program includes selections from Shakespeare, Sheridan, Kipling, Riley, and Fields. She will be assisted by F. F. Mackay, the well-known Shakespearean reader. Mr. Mackay is an actor of the old school, having played leading roles with such artists as Charlotte Cushman, Mrs. Drew, and Edwin Booth.

## "Her First False Step."

"Her First False Step" will be produced at the Academy week of March 7.

## "The Minister's Son."

"The Minister's Son," a rural drama, with W. B. Patton in the leading role, will be the attraction at the Empire Theater week of March 7.

## Forbes Robertson's Career.

Began as a Painter and Led to the Stage.

A quiet determination to do his best in everything he attempts is the dominant characteristic of Forbes Robertson, the eminent English actor, who, with his young American wife, Gertrude Elliott, will make their first joint appearance tomorrow evening at the Columbia Theater in "Hamlet."

In view of the forthcoming engagement, particularly in the light of his notable Hamlet, a short sketch of this noted English actor's career may be interesting.

## Irresistibly Led to Stage.

His associations at this age, however, were such that he found himself irresistibly attracted to the stage, and it was through the influence of his dramatic friend, the late W. G. Willis (of "Charles I." fame) that a few years

ago, he was introduced to the stage.

Johnstone Forbes Robertson, actor, painter, writer, traveler and gentleman, was born in London about fifty years ago. His father was a Scotsman, and for many years was well known in Aberdeen as a journalist and art critic.

Young Robertson was educated in Rouen, France. He inherited his father's penchant for art, and after graduating and traveling through France and Germany he took up painting, and was admitted as a student at the Royal Academy, London. He displayed particular talent at portrait sketching, and at the age of twenty-one was an exhibitor.

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